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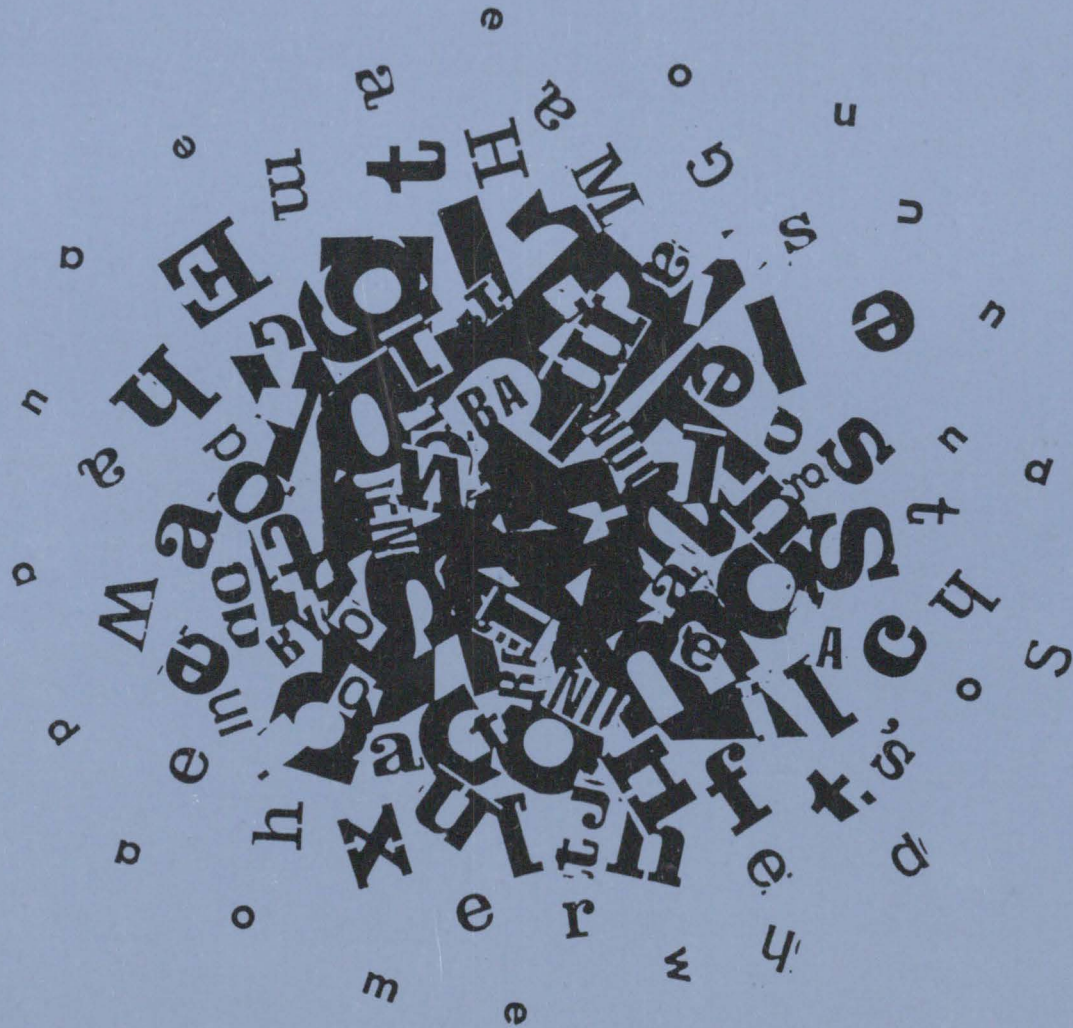
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neXus



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Dear Friends,

Nexus, Wright State University's student-edited literary and art magazine, has started its 37th year. Over the past three decades, *Nexus* has evolved from a newspaper foldout to a polished journal that garners praise and respect from Wright State's campus and around the world. Although the style and editors change over time, the mission of *Nexus* remains the same: to give talented people an opportunity to share their work. This year the staff is making student and faculty awareness and participation one of their primary goals.

We would like to produce three quality issues that showcase the artistry and ability of WSU students and faculty in a diverse mix with writers from outside our community. To do this, *Nexus* needs your help. The current budget is actually not enough to produce three quality issues. We are asking those interested in supporting *Nexus* to become sponsors of the magazine. In appreciation of your generosity, your name or department's name will appear in a special section of *Nexus*.

If you would like to make a donation, please send a check payable to NEXUS to:
W016a Student Union Wright State University Dayton, OH 45435.

Thank you for helping to keep a Wright State tradition alive.

Mindy Cooper,
Editor

NEXUS Fall 2001

Dear Readers,

This year we have decided to stop using themes all together. We thought this might make it easier for students to submit their work. For the most part it worked. We accepted mostly student work for this issue. However, we did not receive as much artwork as we would have liked but that's out of our control. We think that this issue gives a strong sampling of work from the students at Wright State, as well as some excellent work from individuals outside of the community. We hope that you enjoy it.

Sincerely,
Mindy Cooper
Editor
Donna Marbury
Assistant Editor

p.s. We would like to say thank you to Tim Mohrhaus who has served as our Media Coordinator for the last two years. He has unfortunately decided to leave us despite all of our whining. We'll miss him.

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Tim Mohrhaus	Stars and Stripes	back cover

Krista Franklin

Developing Downtown

(for the spirit-talker who walks First & Main)

Credit card hearts,
double-breasted imaginations
pass her every morning, thinking
she needs a doctor, thinking
her up in clean clinical terms like schizophrenia.

Staring through their
cubicle eyes, two car garage minds;
downtown could be so safe without her
street corner discourse with invisible audience,
without the lines and dunes, uncharted map of her earthen face.

The flight of her gesticulating
hands, her foreign language eyes,
so much cleaner without her
high-water pants, burning cigarettes careening
a little too close, caught eternally between index and fuck-you finger.

Poor business men,
gentrifying sentiments, spirits
flat and collapsible as wallets, noose ties
cinched tight as straightjackets, ignoring
her derailed laughter, her emphatic arguments with the unseen.

She could never fit
the format of their memo minds,
eight and half by eleven ideas,
lunch hour to happy hour lives
filled with figures and commodities, realities loose as a novice handshake.

Bradley Cahill

All and None

inspired by Charles Bukowski

We have everything,
and we have nothing, he said...
too Zen for me,
I keep my thoughts in a plastic lunchbox,
and all the years, like dinosaurs,
decay inside and turn into fuel
for gluttonous money machines.
The future begins at the end of this book,
but we haven't gotten to that page yet.
For now, property is just an idea
that instigates bad bedfellows,
all of this baggage and no time for vacation,
everything, and nothing.
But always out there searching for it,
through asphalt alleys, littered with receipts,
to the peak of the Himalayan high-rise,
out there in satellites,
trying to target enemies
with nuclear, I mean unclear intentions,
out there in the frozen north
where polar bears are pumping petrol
at a dollar-eighty-three a gallon,
wealth and success,
greed and ruination,
everything, and nothing,
and the proof, but keystroke away,
as long as this computer doesn't crash...

Noah T. Falck

August Avenues

With names
such as these
summer seems
to be running late,
and if the sound of this frightens you
you can hide your heart
from the fresh air
and think about the last time
you felt love sailing down the veins of your arms
in tiny ships filled with worldly treasures,
those years that tore you in two
scattered about like leaves on a night
when gusting winds played porch chimes
like B.B. King performs the blues.

Fifth Street



Stephanie Irwin

Teddy Taylor

Untitled

(there was no title worthy of him)

i do not know if arrogance
is the stepchild of pride
or perhaps its second cousin
from that other side of the family

i do know that
like pride arrogance
in oneself in myself
is difficult to subdue

i do know that
i am arrogant or
was arrogant or
can be arrogant sometimes

like when someone insults my
intelligence how dare they when
i am smarter than they
or mentions my age how dare they when
i am beyond my years
or comments on my skin how dare they when
i am in love with it now
or oh yeah i've written a few poems too how dare they when
i write poetry

and how dare my granddaddy
with his long conversation and advice when
i knew
about my ABC's, and calculus,
and white girls, and crossing
the street

i paid attention

and he
he just watched cnn and channel 7 news at 7 and 11

then asked me if i knew about
poor Rodney, and that oj, and
that poor woman who burnt
up with her children in our town
how dare he quiz me when

i paid attention

and all he had done was
come to life in florida
live there in a shack
flee there from the klan
then come to the separate and
unequal north to work as a cook and he had
the nerve to lie about his age to
get that job—so we never really knew
how old he was—but he did cook and
that Black boy sent his money to
his Red mother and she
placed it in her bosom

and he was good with his hands
so he became a contractor
built things tall things
painted those things
put green skirts around those things
and y'all missed the point and called it grass

and he was good with his hands
so he had pretty women with
long hair and
pretty legs

and all he had done was
settle down with my grandmother
love her as i have
never seen one human love another
raise eight children—

and you know three of them kids
weren't hers but that was okay
cause it was his family
he would make it work
everyday eight poor
kids felt like rich kids or
rich-little-poor-kids cause
mister worked from sun up to sun down
hustled from moon up to sun up
never rested

and how dare me
when all i had done was
when all i had done was
when what had i done so
when he spoke about

gore and bush.checking my oil.and boy that clinton.
not sleeping all day.the joy of marriage.
manicures.keeping my word.cadillacs.
jesse jackson.big breasts.....and orange juice...

i paid attention

so when he died
i had no regrets

Brother



Stephanie Irwin

Rachelle Sedenik

Daddy's Girl

Some days are hot, and some days God throws all the extra kindling in the fire, goes and chops down a whole forest full of trees, and throws them and this here Earth into the stove. Today God must have been cooking up a feast.

It was so hot that all the ladies of the neighborhood sat down in Old Misses Palatine's cellar and sipped lemonade until dinnertime. Some of the children hid from the sun's scorch in the abandoned railroad tunnel, enjoying the cool dampness that comes from being underground and the rest, the more ambitious ones, went down to the rock quarry about two miles out of town and spent the day jumping and swimming and splashing in its icy depths. Being too old and modest to swim, the ladies sat around not doing a thing except declaring how hot it was outside and wiping the perspiration off their faces and necks with handkerchiefs. No work was done, no floors swept, no clothes washed, and no houses cleaned. I sat around with the ladies, longing to go swim in the quarry and relieve my flushed body with its coolness, but Heaven forbid if my mother's sixteen-year-old girl go "splash avound in dose vatas like tramp."

For supper the entire neighborhood just had sandwiches, that being the big decision of the ladies' afternoon. Misses Palatine said it best. "Lord knows we love our men, but they kill us if they come home and find the stove a blazing," she exclaimed. Of course, all the ladies agreed with old Potato Head because she was second generation, and they went home to fix their husbands cold cuts.

My father came in about half past five. I gave him a cold beer before he could sit down and went to help Mark and Tommy wash themselves free of the mud they collected on the way home from swimming. On my way out back, I heard Father walk into the kitchen and bend down to give Mother a kiss on top of her babushka. Mother asked, "Victor, how vas de day?"

Father began, "Five of the boys dropped from the heat today. One of them fell off the ladder, nearly knocked his head clean off, and then..."

"Vho?" interrupted my mother in her normal abrupt way. From what they tell me,

which is about as much as chickens talk to pigs, Mother and Father met through her older brother Joseph who has lived in America for almost 60 years. He arranged for his boss's son to meet his youngest sister, not more than three weeks after she stepped on Ellis Island. My mother was only sixteen when she left the old country, and her clear blue eyes and thick dark hair helped make men forget about the hell's fire which she had brewing inside. They were married right away, and although my father spoke no Croatian when they met, after twenty years of being with my mother, he can best the craziest Croat in swearing. My mother no longer throws knives when they argue, but she still has a lot to learn about being a reserved American wife.

"Vho vas de boy?" she asked again.

My father replied, "The Paripovic boy. He was up on the ladder fixing the roof when bzzzzes, smack! He fell like a fly that drank too much punch on the Fourth of July."

"Uh-wuw, ya-ha! Dat boy need vack on de head. Mayve start brain. Ya-ha-ha-ha," Mother laughed again.

During our supper, Father finished telling about the rest of the day as he layered his bread with meat and cheese. "Blasted heat," he said. "Ain't ever going to get this house built. I's told all the boys that if the heat don't break tomorrow," he paused to reach over and grab Tommy by the collar as he made a desperate attempt to race outside after finishing his salami sandwich in two bites. "...not to come back 'till it does. Why can't I have workers like this little soldier?" Father tousled Tommy's sandy brown hair with his large hand and placed Tommy on his knee despite the intolerable heat. They looked like replicas of one another except one was very small and skinny and the other looked as though he had eaten jack's magic bean and grown overnight to be a giant. "It could be 200 degrees outside and this one would still go a whooping and a hollering all over South Jackson Street playing cowboys and Indians!" Father finished.

That was Mark and Tommy's signal to start clapping their hands to their mouths and start the war cry. Unable to contain themselves any longer, both jumped from their chairs, spilling milk on the way up, and dashed through the hallway and out the back door to play.

"Mark, Thomas!" Mother shouted until she couldn't hear their cries any longer. "Children be seen, not hard." Father chuckled and his dark eyes sparkled and widened as he said, "Little Hilda, I bet you were the quietest child in all of Europe. I bet your mama and papa forgot you existed because you were silent all the time. You never yelled and shouted. Shucks, you never even opened your mouth to breathe heavily." He ducked as she threw a punch at him.

A smile crept on my face, and I hurriedly cleared the tale of its heavy off-white dishes in fear that Mother saw, and the next swing would be for me. The light butterfly breeze caused by my walking to the kitchen felt nice, but all too weak to combat the sweat puddles that had been forming on me. As I grabbed two more beers from the ice box, I broke off a chip of ice to suck on. It chilled my mouth, but the rest of me pained from the heat. Father was still talking as I snaked around the corner and placed the bottles in front of my parents.

"I let all the boys go at noon meal today. Couldn't bear the thought of them frying for my sake. Let 'em be miserable on their property. I stayed on a couple of hours to try and get things at the house done, but Lord have mercy, it was hot."

We moved out to the porch in hopes that coolness would find us easier in the open outside rather than in the closed confines of the house, but coolness wasn't in the mood to show its face and was more contented to play a game of hide and seek where it always hid. Mother and I told Father about the ladies' discussion in Old Misses Palatine's cellar, sharing with him that Beatrice, the lady two houses down the way, is with child again. Father had some notion about it already because Beatrice's old man was one of the few that was hesitant to leave the house building today.

"Scary is vomen vit a child in such heat. I too be afraid go home," Mother said laughing, and the heat dragged on with them exchanging knowledge and gossip from their separate worlds in order to bring themselves closer. I stopped paying attention for the heat was too much. One could smell the grass browning and baking under the sun's rays. With that in mind, I walked out back to check on the garden. Mother and I managed to water the plants once today, the only thing we managed today, yet it did not seem

to help for the bean plants were etched with golden brown around its leaf edges, and the crumbling potato mound looked as if the slightest breeze could blow them away, if that breeze ever chose to come. The rest of the plants had made a mistake in rising from the ground and now were trying to recoil back into the dirt.

Before pumping the water, I wrapped a rag around my hand remembering the burn that smarted from earlier. The deep red pump handle had all day to collect heat, and if it could burn me part way through the morning, I could bet my last nickel it would burn me right now. I started to pump, and warm water from pipes cooking underground gushed out.

"Princeza vata too hot. Plan die. I vata later moj ljepota," my mother said as she appeared in the back yard. She tucked her arm through mine and brought me back out front. Uncle Joe and one of my father's brother had joined him on the porch. Mother slipped into the house and came out with another round of brew, and the talking grew louder with every sip. They talked of politics and war and of the old country and the new country, but mainly they talked of the heat. Mark and Tommy mosied on up as the sun went down, and as the heat let its fiery grip slip a few degrees, and I took them to the washroom to get ready for bed.

When the boys were as clean as boys get, we went back downstairs. Mother had made beds for the boys in the cellar because their attic room was like an oven in the heat. They said their good-nights and after a few seconds of wrestling with the uncles, Tommy and Mark went to bed.

"Marlienne, go fetch your elders zome more of your mother's vamous brew," my uncle Joe said. My uncle Joseph came to America when he was three years old, and his accent was nowhere near as heavy as my mother's. I joked with my father on my way to the kitchen, "Papa, if you stay with Mama much longer, you will sound more Croatian than Uncle Joseph!" The porch erupted in laughter except for my mother who tried to keep a straight face as she always did when the joke was directed at her. I came back with the beers a few minutes later only to find my uncle John, my father's youngest brother, passed out, and my mother, father, and uncle Joseph singing nursery rhymes.

Giggling, I quietly set the beers down and went upstairs to my bed.

Morning did not come quickly, and I lay uncomfortably warm in a slip. Sweat droplets would rise to the surface of my skin only to pool up, trickle down my face, and dampen my hair. My only prayer that night was quite simple: "If Hell is this hot may I become a nun. Amen." I had never known anything so hot, so painful. I listened to the crickets who should have been making more noise than a ticker tape parade being the middle of July and all, but instead they were too hot to rub their legs together more than every once in awhile. I must have fallen asleep despite the heat because I woke up when someone made a thump climbing on the roof. Lord knows why anyone would be on the roof in the middle of the night, so I went up to the boys' room to look out and see.

Our house was a typical city house with two stories and an attic. Through the attic window, a body can get out onto the roof that covers the house. Mark and Tommy loved giving me a scare by playing on the roof when I'm supposed to watch them. I wasn't about to put up with their horsing around on such a hot night, so I yelled, "Mark, Thomas, you get your hind ends off that roof this second before I get Papa to pull you off."

To my surprise I heard a deep snore, and as I looked out, the moon outlined Father passed out and snoring on the roof as drunk as no one would want to be. Laughter erupted from me as I thought of Mother's reaction to this one. "Victor, you vet vole nehvorhood see you drunk and naked" Whack! Goes the fry pan against the wall. "Victor, you better run vazta" Whack! Goes the rolling pin, and as I was picturing my mother with her babushka half off like a crazy gypsy woman picking up her long butchers knife to teach my father to sleep on the roof drunk and naked, time suddenly slowed. My eyes sluggishly focused away from my mental daydream on to my Father as he tossed over in his sleep and started a downward roll to the edge of the roof. I could see what was about to happen, yet God help me, my body would not move, would not scream, would not even function. As he slipped from my view, my breath came back, yet still I could not shout.

It is strange and almost funny what one notices when tragedy occurs. I cannot remember my brothers being in the crowd around my father's body, but I do remember thinking how Old Misses Palatine looked like hippopotamus I had seen in one of my

schoolbooks with her big mouth flopping out orders and her large girth showing through her nightgown. I remember asking my mother if she had watered the garden when the doctor finally arrived to say father had broken his neck and suffered no pain. I remember her reply of "Vose dat take shall provide" seeming to fit perfectly with the question, and I remember her suddenly exploding with tears and sound so incredibly loud and viciously that I thought she would bust open. But most of all, I remember that it was hot.

Leslie Benson

I am Woman

I am earth mother caretaker struggling with drug culture birth control sensual cerebral easy Hippie mother sister daughter Dharma's herbal heaven mother divine nature wing shelter warmth down to earth Maya Africana archetype of womanhood fluid barefoot unpierced untouched Native feather-wrapped American flowing mane feté holy female in man's eye memory of mother praying boy child marries pregnant goddess look at her stomach purity in reflection manifests grounded wisdom I am strong



Heather Skinner

In Praise of Distance

You could see it from here
but not clearly, the way
the light bit the sky.
I wanted to touch Faraway. Beneath
me sand slipped and hills rocked.
Two butterflies wagged
over tumbled weed.

Now, a train hollers between
the hills, echoing I want to die
too soon. Too soon.

Heart splinters yellow light. Beneath
black skirt black boots laced again.
Button white shirt again. Pull
back black, gray now white
hair and twist it tightly against
my neck.

I load easel and canvas in my car.
Carry blue and orange beneath my arm,
and drive the bitter sky, hear it whispering.

Enamor

And when ecstasy embraces my soul
Passion professionally presides over this sexual protagonist
The moon intimately ignites to induce internal infernos
Storm like sweat secretes from my pores onto silk sheets
Silhouettes gracefully grind amidst a gazing galaxy
Molasses like massages manufacture midnight moans
She's congested by the endless erotic incisions
Wet kisses captivate my cognitive
Both shadows are consumed by the climatic experience
As the Sun eminently erects
The Earth begins to pant and moisten
And two hearts conceal twilight memoirs
About a moment when fantasies were fulfilled by an embrace from ecstasy.

Christopher Green

Last Night

Last night was livid
last night was alive
last night was a bomb dropped
-50 kiloton beehive
and everyday moving
like bees on cocaine

buzzzz

the voices were their own
impromptu jazz solos
of burnt-out brain cells.
From such a mercurial Monday
of intermittent clouds
and a steady cool thermometer
came a night on fire
came a night on fire

...

last night was lonesome
last night was long
last night was a body chopped
-50 kilogram guillotine
and everybody stuck
like bees in molasses

buzzzz

the voices not our own
they are flailing tentacles
of sushi'd conversation.
From such a mercurial Monday
an oven with a lid of steamed clouds
and a shattered thermometer
came rains and a silent train
came rains and a silent train

...

last night was rapid
last night was real
last night we giggled and talked

-50 thousand words last night
if you took us all combined
like a congregated swarm

buzzzz

the voices not alone
but dancing round and round
to the orchestra of laughter.
On such a mercurial Monday
we stopped talking to stare at the clouds
and the voices ceased rhythm and meter
came another night
came another night.

Don Bruce

poet.

i feel as if i'm imposing as if somehow these electronic flickers are prying open a window sill half way across the city and tiptoeing into your room and peeking in your panty drawer or flushing out your porno mags from beneath your bed all while being kitty quiet so as to not disturb the creative process that seems more like a snail's race only the slime isn't behind you but on the page where everything you've ever thought or felt or fucked has spilled over into words that spring from fingers from tendon from thought until you might as well have just jerked off your emotions all over the screen because it is you that is being thrown to the devils tonight and the bright lights won't hide you and no cloak can shield your soul because you are a poet and this is what you live for...

Lincoln N. Schreiber

Conversation alone

Why are you smiling at me like that?
I didn't do anything special.
Just one night really.

Why are you reaching for me?
I can only provide so much for you.
I hardly did anything.

Why do you look so much like me?
I'm not particularly special.
I would think that you'd look more like your mother.

Am I totally crazy for thinking this?
Why am I indifferent about accepting you?
How did I get so lucky and so blessed?

Does everyone think like this?
Why do I doubt myself?
Why am I asking about your love?

Will you always feel this way?
Will I always hold your attention like this?
I wish that it always stays like this.

It will be nice though when you can answer.

Wednesday's Path

It is what we all want:
tight curl of the leaf,

monumental shadow
of the storm.

From this high cliff
the surfers are flailing gulls.

You have asked me for my forgiveness.
Below, the waves pound

their white drums. Beside me the trees
shudder. I think of the miles

I have logged from here to the vast
land of our disappointment.

I slice the air with careful strides.
Raindrops dot the trail. Time

to remember the meticulous
accounting of daughters,

those bright, sharp edges
on the periphery of praise.

A More Perfect Union

Maybe if you had mentioned that you are a merman
I could have been prepared for the sight of your
Shimmering scales, floral fins and bony spikes
Upon the dropping of your pants in my pink bedroom

Perhaps if I had told you that I am a gorgon
You would have known how to stroke the
Writhing purple and orange snakes of my hair
When I threw my head into your lap and sobbed

Could be that we should have shed these canvas cloaks
But aren't they so very pretty? I think possibly
That yours was painted by Andy Warhol; but I bought mine
From a gypsy bastard who said that Renoir was the incubus
Who hurled seed at his mother late Tuesday night

And it really doesn't matter that our children will be
Spread on crackers and served at the next gallery opening
Imagine how they would be anyhow, the children of a gorgon and merman
Not the vision of Dick and Jane running with Spot, I would say

J.D. Giffin

sin

(for eric and his girl)

pleasure between fingers
lick of lips
draw in deep with
fondle of butt

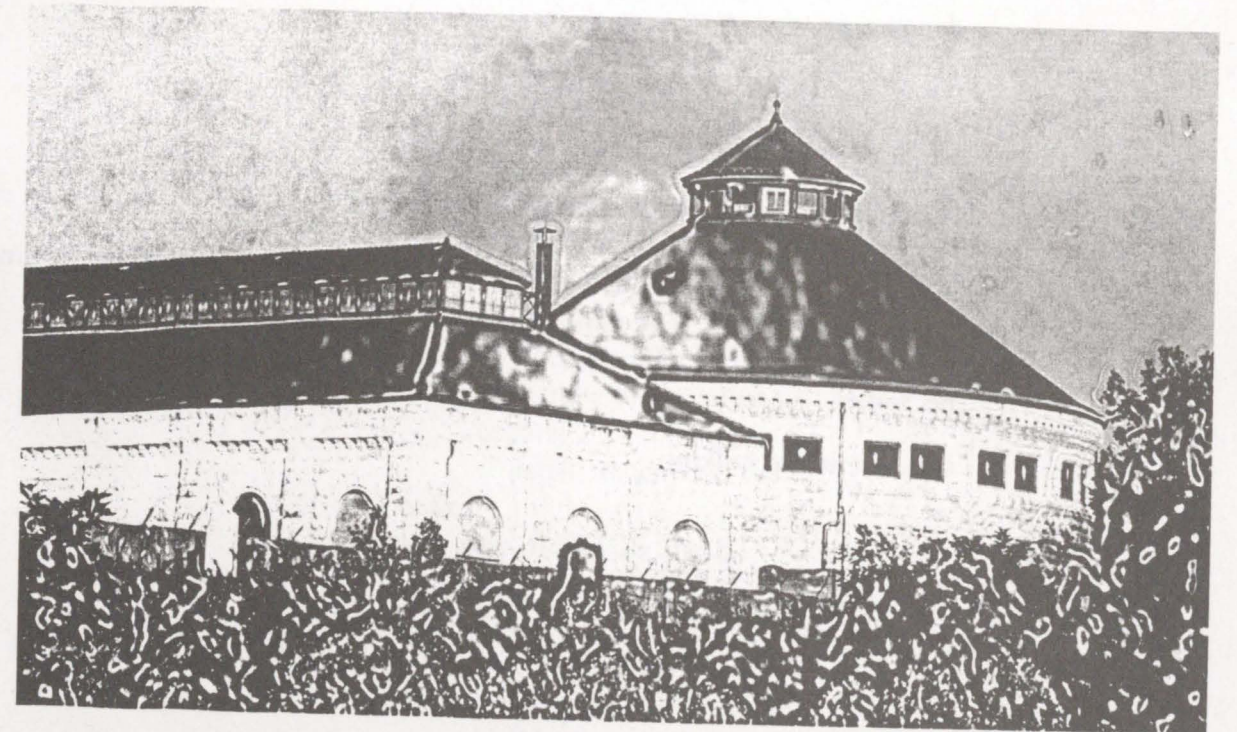
exhales
twist and tangle in
darkness

conscience
shrouded in liquid
white clouds

Father's eyes closed.

(laughing to myself)
i present an offering:
cigarettes

Treatment



Tim Mohrhaus

Kelli Rodin

Untitled

genius vietnam vet talking to jesus,
walking with jesus,
dancing on the street corner for jesus,
doom is coming he says and smiles,
starts to shuffle away,
doom is coming he says this time screaming,
i could have bought alot of stock if i had known the world was ending,
stock in jesus,
he smiles
and continues walking

Alicia Raye Speed

Like Candy from a Stranger

get
 ethnic
crayola creation

of color
what if the world is not
what you have always
thought?

MALE=white male not
black male???

linguistical propaganda
 racism with a smile
 syrupy sweet sugar
 coating-
 lethal toxicity of the
naive
what does JUSTICE mean
to YOU?
just=fair

 are we
 JUST?
LOST?
 or JUST?
In Denial?

Dreams of Movement

We walk on
 You and I
 Hands held
And breath
 Held
And eyes held so tightly
 Shut

You flash me
 Sharp scissor cheek bones
 And Clara Bow mouth
I turn off
 To move away
 Pointy lashes
 Bleeding

You cultivate some adhesive
 Clear tube super glue
 Hold tight
 Grip fast
 Postpone my flight
 Just a moment
 Longer

Our hair in the wind
 mingles
 Twisting into ropes
 Of red black and gold
Until like nightmare children
 We are Siamese

And I feel us sinking
 Feel us falling
 Feel us melting
 From safety in nitroglycerine houses

My form against yours
 Soft bodies
 Giving
 Accepting
 Melding
Our hair twists together
 We come
 Closer

Watching as my arm becomes yours
 Our rings in conflict
 Fall
 Hollow iron thud
 When we both know
 It should've been pretty silver
 Tinkle

In that union we are pulled
 Tighter
 Until lines are blurred
 Borders lost
Until heart meets heart
 And they both
 Stop

Fred Marion

Women Like Nice Eyes

The glossy print of the Victoria's Secret poster reflects his large frame. His lips are big and heavy like wet lead. A thick nose, broken twice, and hanging folds of skin crowd his eyes. The white and brown stubble on his face is like cat hair on velvet. He stares at Tyra Banks who looks at him with a longing that's almost embarrassing. He looks away, but the soft lines of her breasts and feline thighs imprint themselves in his mind. Grip ambles on through the mall, a hand-in-pocket-limp that suggests idiocy. A dimwit walk he has given up trying to fight.

A mother and a blond-haired boy walk hand-in-hand. She wears black pants that stick to her body like static cling and a short, sharp haircut. Through sheer, blushing accident their eyes meet. *Hello mother, want another?* She rotates towards a chocolate store and resumes her cell-phone conversation. Her legs are lithe and muscular, ass high and tight. *Lost all that pregnant woman fat.* Only her hips seem lower than they should be, but Grip sees this as seductively slow and sensual, classicism imbued upon the ultramodern, even though he never would have put it that way.

She is making him hard and he finds a bench where his lust will go unnoticed. He likes the way her neck is crooked to the side and how confidently she talks into the phone. She looks in his direction once more before heading away and he watches her from behind, intently, until a necklace kiosk swallows her and the boy up. He stands now, cock successfully tucked up and under his belt, and heads towards the bathroom.

He passes Tyra again and in her he sees the woman with the boy. The skin of her legs dark and taut, her eyes staring into his.

Elsewhere, Amanda, the secretary, thinks about her two boyfriends. One, Mike, obviously believes *he's* playing *her*. He calls every three days or so, wanting to come to her apartment, "My roommates are a pain in the ass... the place is a wreck," yap-blah—blah-yap-blah, "Why don't we watch a movie at yours, go out to dinner or something?" He has a great smile though and the stamina of a drunk. He knows how to make her laugh. Lawrence is starting to worry her. He's quiet, nervous, and, she fears, starting to

fall in love, but he's actually intelligent. When she gets him going he can recall facts and anecdotes with a histrionic lucidity that runs goose pimples up her back. Something someone wrote plays ping pong in her mind, "There are two kinds of people who are really fascinating – people who know absolutely everything and people who know absolutely nothing." *Lawrence and Mike.*

She can't keep her mind on the report.

Samantha A. Kerns. D.O.B. 04/13/77. D.O.O. 07/16/01.

416 55 7736. 5'9". Caucasian. Hair, black. Eyes, brown.

Stealing women's sports bras, stuffing them in sock. \$48.98.

First offense. Permanent expulsion.

Even after six months, Amanda hasn't gotten used to the fact that so many people get caught stealing. Must not have had as many "shoppers" on theft control when she did it. 18 full-timers at her mall. 214 cameras. 56 full and part-time security guards. Yea, she would be *good* now. She coached her sister Marissa for a couple of hours once on the condition that she not steal from her mall. "You damn well better not get caught," she'd told her.

Amanda hates the new district manager. She is backing up the computer files by hand. Her hands are dry from the index cards she's writing on. As she writes you can make out her shape and movements in the closely pinned Polaroids that hang side to side and top to bottom behind her. The "Wall of Shame," every lucky shoplifter, drunk, and con artist is entitled to one free glamour shot and a prime spot beside his or her peers.

The bathroom smells too clean, astringent. Grip enters a stall in the back and with his left hand on the ink-ridden wall, quietly masturbates, spilling into the commode. He doesn't bother to flush or even wash his hands, just ambles back into the light of the mall.

Grip can see himself in the mirrors that line the housing of the machines, giant escalators that run smoothly, quietly, up and down. His hair is thinning. His hands are large and awkward (he puts them in his pockets), but his eyes still have that iridescence, black or gray, or somewhere between. *Women like nice eyes.*

The mulched palm trees and spreading Wisteria that grow out of the floor look nice against the white grout and pastel tile that squeaks under his tennis shoes. They form a median for the gauntlet of shops. Nature indifferent to man, stoically giving the artificial light and murmur of voices a little does of aestheticism that only he seems to notice.

Grip sees form and grace and art in the women (if only he could articulate his thoughts), feels it again in his pants. He sees them, their dyed hair, high heels that click-click-click, and the little ridge their panty lines make. He notices their bags and imagines they're filled with gifts for him, shoe polish, electric razors, ties, day-planners.

Grip's downstairs when he sees her in line at Chick-Fil-A. Her boy is upset, tugging on her pant leg and whimpering while she squints at the menu. He'd been sure she had already left.

Grip gets in line two couples behind her. Occasionally he sees her profile again, notices her red lips and even this makes his lungs work harder. He slides to the left of the line and looks for a wedding band. None, while almost every other finger glints and sparkles in the white light. He toys with the idea of tapping her shoulder, holding out his hand and introducing himself.

She has her food now. The boy holds a white paper bag with a grease circle on it and she carries two sodas in a brown cup carrier. He slips out of line and follows her. He's desperate now, knows she's leaving with the food. *Slow down.* He hastens towards her, grimacing as pain scraps down his right leg, until he's beside her. Grip tries to act like it's a coincidence, pacing with the pair, but can't help glancing over to see if she's looking at him. She is. He sees her secretive glances, trying not to turn her neck. His breathing gets hard again, and he worries she can hear it.

Then suddenly, forcefully, she's veering right. The boy almost trips but acquiesces without a word; he's pulling French fries out of the bag.

Arnold and Dean look like cops, dressed in their black uniforms, two-way radios hanging off their hips like holsters. They walk into the surveillance room four minutes late. Dean sits down in front of monitor bank "A" while Arnold paces in the back of the

office. He's holding his stomach and breathing deeply, filling and refilling a little paper cup with water, its bottom starting to get soggy. Arnold and Dean's radios go off simultaneously.

"46 and 47, in yet?"

"Another busy fucking day," Arnold says. "Yea Tom, we're listening."

"Okay, look at monitor 14. See the large white male, 5'11" or so, green zip-up sweatshirt?"

"Yea." Dean points him out.

"Get him outta here, we just got our second complaint at the information desk. Guess he's been following women around all day. Scared the hell out of one."

The radio bursts static and goes silent. Arnold sighs, reaching into his pocket again for Roloids. "Why can't these guys just buy hookers?"

The secretary stares rapidly into a computer monitor. The screen-saver kicks in and she notices the little blips of light that fly toward the edges of the screen. With her eyes unfocused she can give her body a sort of weightlessness, a tumbling feeling like she's rolling end over end. Directionless contentment. But her face is there too, casually looking back at her observing her. Fine, thin nose, and large eyes. Her lower lip sticks out heavily, as if she were perpetually sad, and her hair softly frames her pearl face. *What am I doing here?* In the reflection, hundred of others are vying to be seen. The Polaroids. Husbands, wives, kids, grandparents. She feels trapped in the little office with them. They aren't looking for anything, emotionless mannequins that spend the day watching her give them a number, a label, a ranking.

Absentmindedly, she grabs at the phone and listens to her voicemail again. Her mom asking her if she'll be able to make her sister's birthday party (*has it already been a year?*), Mike calling from a pay phone, some asshole from her credit card company.

Three offices down, in the surveillance room, Grip produces his ID.

"You married Mr. Grip Alvarar?" Arnold, the white man, asks.

"No sir," he says.

"Well man, I hate to say this, but I don't think you're going to meet her at no mall, especially carrying on the way you were. You scared these women. You understand that?" Arnold is looking at Grip's face, trying perhaps, to see things from his point of view.

Grip pulls his eyes away, nods and stares at the floor. His large hands are in-between his legs as if they were cuffed. His great big shoulders slumped.

"Ahh man, you should be glad you're not married. My wife's enough of a pain in the ass for five guys. Swear she even gives Arnold there heartburn, and he only sees her 'bout once a year." Grip tries to think of something to say, doesn't know how to act. All he can hear is his breathing, high-pitched, and the scratching of Arnold's pen. The silence settles on him like a soggy blanket.

"What do you do for a living?" Dean finally asks.

"Work for RCV." More pen scratching, eyes studying the swirls in the thin carpet. "It's a rubber company. Toss floor mats on a conveyor belt."

"Doing that long?"

"'Bout twelve years. It's all right though. I work with some good men." The little room full of monitors seems too small for his body. Sweat beads up under his arms and rolls down his sides. Arnold is X'ing the papers now. He hands them to Dean and goes back to the water.

"Okay sir, this X here says you agree to be photographed, and this one says you agree that you won't come back to this mall for any reason. You understand you'll be charged with trespassing if you even step foot in the parking lot."

Grip nods his big head, signing his name slowly, carefully like his walk, and slides the paper across the desk to Arnold.

The camera is a small black and red Polaroid with a flip-up top. Grip stands motionless against a blue cinder block wall. The flash hurts his eyes.

"Looks like you're done here." They each grab one of his arms and walk him back through the mall. He knows they're walking past Tyra but doesn't look up. He won't take his eyes off the floor, watching feet cut left and right, out of their way. He can feel their eyes on him.

The two officers walk Grip all the way back to his Buick and stand there, watching as he gets in. He closes his door with a puchink-chink, the latch not catching right. One edge of the door hangs over the side of the body like Grip's belly, loosely hiding his belt.

The two watch his car pull away, puffing out white smoke. "That thing's working hard to carry his ass around," Arnold says.

Upstairs, Amanda, the secretary, waits patiently for the Polaroid to clear up. Slowly a large man materializes. *It's like watching God create Adam.* Grip's light hair and the outline of his round head appear first. As his eyes slowly come into focus she's struck by the sadness in them. Amanda knows, without looking at the report, what landed him a spot in her office, a spot on her wall. She pins him up next to a man who got caught stealing used cd's and spins around in her chair. Her coffee rests on a pile of blank index cards, getting cold. She was supposed to call Mike back.

Sheree Renée Thomas

mapou wine

I wake to hear
your breathing
a wet whisper
where things begin
your tongue
a startled shade of green

in the night
the lwa walked along
the sleeping curve of our spines
they dance
as I dance for you now
with painted toes
digging in the moist earth

in these uncovered roots
rest the soles of spirit signs
sealed with honey dust
sprinkled with morning dew

I wake
to sweet tremors unfolding
beneath bare feet
my big toe dripping
mapou wine
down your throat.

Sarah Jenson

A Desert Rose

Within her fragile mind
her past haunted with darkness
Within his sacred heart
his past shrouded his existence

Within her sacred heart
a fragile mind now brought her new life
Within his fragile mind
a sacred heart now consumed his soul

Within their fragile minds and sacred hearts
a past is born with new light
now becomes eternity and
the future only promises
forever a sacred heart
and fragile mind
intertwined
as one.

The March of the Broken Men

Return us to the sea.
Grasp us in a chill embrace;
Wipe the dirt and sweat and tears from our face
For we are not ready for these legs on which we stand.
When we return to you, bleeding
And crawl towards your feet, pleading
Will you hear our strangled voices crying?
Will you carry your broken children home?

Return us to the sea.
No more of us lingering on this blasted land
No more of us nibbling from a dead god's hand
March us, O March us back towards the sand
And return us.
Bring us home.

To the wind-swept waves and yellow foam
We come.
To aged Triton's coral horn
We come.

From under the mud we extend our hands
From beneath the mud we reach for sky
In a final desperate, clenching grasp

We come.

And we do not come alone.

For there are no more bones in this broken land,
There is nowhere left for us to stand.
Nothing for us to cling to in this mass of disillusioned souls.

There is nothing left for us to touch,
Nothing left for us to see.
The sun will never rise again to meet our eyes in hope's horizon.

Perhaps in time, we fade away
Return our bodies to the sea
And when there is no longer time
We shall lose our memories.

*Do you remember the chill waters of the river Thames?
You lit a lamp at the water's edge for me.*

I was a child, and you were a child.
Let the memory sleep peacefully.

*Do you remember catching fireflies by your willow tree?
Is there nothing left for me?*

I know not of what you speak.
I never had a willow tree.

Why are you so very cold?

We were children long ago, my dear,
But now the world is growing old.

Do you remember anything at all?

I remember dust and empty halls.

Deus hanc terram delebit.
Nihil de tempore fugere potest.
Weep for us, O me misera.

And when there is no longer time
No longer will we need to speak.
And when there is no longer time
Nothing will be left but sleep.

And when there is no longer time
I shall plant a willow tree.

Bowman

Sugary puddles
shimmer
on a puckered lot
and Lifesaver sirens part rows
the bubble gummed skid marks lie smoking hot
as sugar met tart
so slow

Corn syrup tears fell
on marshmallow cops
when the parents were told the tale

"She slid and squealed
to avoid a gum drop
and hit a red licorice rail"

Cotton candy hangs from a seat
and Slurpy streaks the glass
her chocolate eyes
melt
away in heat
while the syrup
drips from
the dash

Her lollipop pals and ginger bread friends
sob
a bitter
goodbye

Candy heart halves remain in the end
when sweetness
and sour
collide

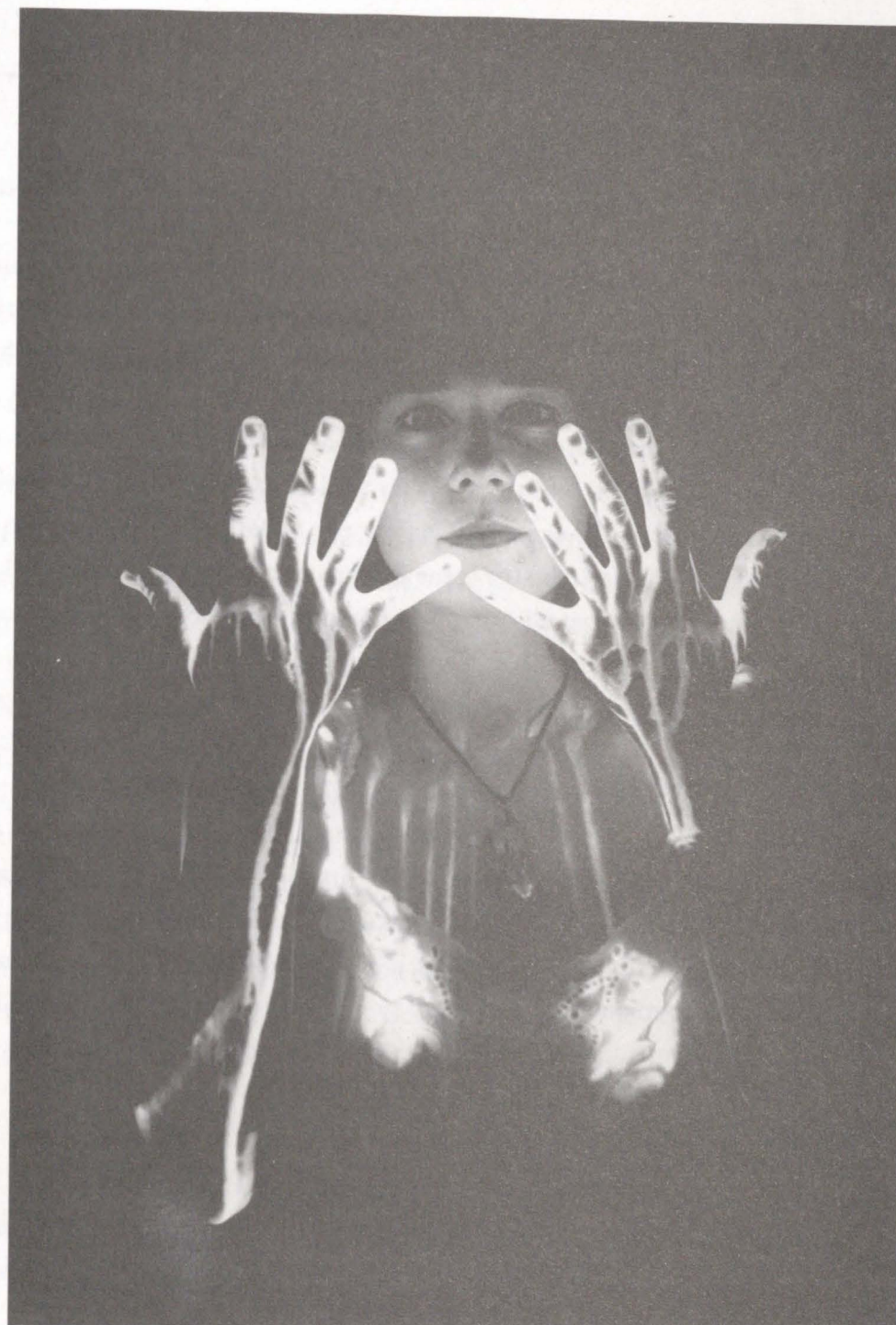
Brazen

Teeth bared he sat in quiet expectation with anxious elation for the hunter,
No longer was destiny a victim.
Soon light came and with light the hunter, nose to the ground.
In silence teeth bared, perfect time awaited;
Came with grace as wary glances floated on silent feet.
Teeth bared prey silently glared as past the hunter walked.
Sigh of relief with disbelief as the shadows held on to yet another.
Teeth bared.

Kim Campion

Symbols Of Chaos

Oranges bloom in a garden of blue
The cry of adults shuffles its leaves
Before the white rainbow runs away
Little Johnnies dance in the Venus light
Quickly rising the warm, blue snowflakes
In Woodstock the dark queen dances
To the smell of peanut butter sandwiches



Jack Bowman

The Man in the Air

I thought it was a myth. The man in the air. But here I am, about to meet him. And there's only one way to get to him. I close my eyes, say a quick, incoherent prayer under my breath, and push off. Slide down the connecting line from one plane to the other. A connector that hadn't been there 15 minutes ago and wouldn't be there 15 minutes from now. And looking at that from the point of view that time is already billions of years old and will continue to unfold for God knows how long... that half an hour just doesn't seem like a solid enough time for me to make it from one plane to the other. But I do. And I'm inside. And the plane I came up in is disconnecting and I try not to think about having to do that all over again 24 hours from now. Thousands of feet in the air, going at speeds that make my insides quiver.

I step forward and see him. He's big. He's a big guy. He's wearing a white suit and a white hat and all I can think of is how he looks like I imagine Thursday and suddenly I can't remember when the last time was that I picked up a book by Chesterton. We shake hands and I realize this is the first time that I really understood those clichéd descriptions like "ham-fisted." Meaty, his hands are meaty. Sausage fingers and all. He gestures for me to take a seat. There's a leather couch beside me and I sink into it, just staring around me. It must be nice to have this kind of money. The kind of money to chase your dreams and make them come through. And I say so.

"Heh, chase 'em... good one." He chuckles and hands me some sort of alcoholic something in a short round glass. There's ice.

Hmmm, I hadn't even thought of the wording before I said it, hadn't meant it to be literal.

I open my mouth to ask him a question (I figure, I'm here to interview him, I should probably ask questions...) and I realize, that even though I know I'm here to

interview him, *I don't know what I'm doing here*. And my embarrassment and confusion and "Oh God, my editor will kill me. First interview this guy grants in the five years he's been doing this, and I choke." All of that turns out not to matter because it's like this guy has been spending those five years letting his own imagination interview him and he knows exactly what to say. Thankfully, I'm not too flustered to remember to turn on my tape recorder in time.

"It all started," he says, settling back into a big armchair across from me, sipping from his own round glass "because I kept seeing these beautiful, gorgeous sunsets. I mean, every once in a while all the time." He pauses, frowning a little and picks some lint off his knee. Then looks off a little past me. "And I would take pictures of them. And sometimes they would turn out and sometimes they wouldn't. And sometimes I wouldn't have a camera, and those times... those times just about killed me." He pauses again and then continues, shrugging a little. "And so I tried to take pictures with my mind but of course they didn't always turn out and mostly I wouldn't even remember to think about them later anyway. Although occasionally they would creep back in. And I just *hated* to lose those moments. Those perfect, wonderful sunsets. Each one like it was heralding the apocalypse. And I couldn't tell you how many times I looked at one of those and thought "This is it" and stood there wondering if it will be this second or the next that I see the four horsemen ride out. And one day I'm standing at this little airport I kept one of my private jets at..."

I just want to say here that it boggles me that he's the got money, don't know how, but that he's got enough that he can do things like own not just one, but multiple jets and just have them and not worry about them or their upkeep. It's just... he has jets, you know? It was like talking about petting your dog...

"...And I hopped in and instead of going off to a nice little business lunch with this colleague of mine, instead of that I left him outside and told the pilot to just follow it. Follow that sunset. Keep exactly the same distance from it. I didn't ever want the sun to

go down, I was just too sick of losing those beautiful moments. And that's when I realized..."

Another pause, this one slightly longer, which is a good thing because at some point I'd stopped breathing so that I'd make sure not to miss a word. And then I remembered I sort of needed air to live and right after that he continued.

"... and I suddenly realized that I'd been planning on doing this for a long time. When I bought the jets (what did I need jets for? When I wanted something, people came to *me*). When I hired the pilots (the guys had no family, liked to be by themselves, perfect people, rootless). And, of course, when I got some of my associates to go and gather information and figure out exactly how long a day is (It's not 24 hours of course, it's just that little bit more). And exactly how big around the earth is (needed it down to the inch, it's the little bits that count, that creep up on you). And it wasn't a week after I had those figures, those random figures that my brain told me I needed, it wasn't a week after that that I saw that moment and I took it and followed it and came to live in one moment and one time."

A much longer pause now and I figure it's time to play the part of the interviewer. Time to ask some questions. But when I open my mouth he just cuts me off with a wave of his hand and gives me all the answers he feels he needs to.

"Yes, I know I'm just chasing a dream.

And sure it rains sometimes.

And sure it doesn't look the same as it did.

And no, I don't miss the sunrises and I don't miss the noon.

And no, it can't always be a perfect moment.

But it's enough that I'm chasing it.

And I'm not stuck on the ground.

Wishing I had my camera.

And wondering when the four will ride out.

And hell, maybe I'm one of them.

And maybe I just need to wait for the others to come along.

And we'll catch that sunset.

And we'll freeze it in the sky.

And that'll be enough."

Sharing Creation

There will never be a child
that claims both of us as a parent
—life does make these demands.

But somehow there is still a desire between us
to reach into the future, to put into motion
something concrete and alive.

In place of a child
and across the distances of time and space
word upon word
and phrase upon phrase
we write poetry together.

It may not carry
our DNA joined together
in a new and unique form.

But it is a statement
that no matter what
we together weave together.

In place of separation
and across egos and loneliness and dreams
strand upon strand
and caress upon caress
we bring our life to birth.

What Cubans Say

If you stop old Cuban men
in Key West and ask them
where they are from,

they will always say: "Aquí."
The here of exile's hardhead.
They will never say: "Allá."

Meaning that island 90 miles
in the distance because to say
"allá" they'd have to relive

the pain of how they got
from there to here, and who
likes to jump so far?

Gloria Burgess

Black Peonies

for inside their mouths
are the many tongues of my people
Wolof Fulani Ibo Ashanti

if only their petaled tongues
in that weltering heat
could have summoned
something of the old ways
surely their cries
would have blossomed
into wings



Jay Nerlinger

Patriotism

And the flag flaps in the wind. "These Colors Don't Run." From what? These colors do run, they run fast. Run from simplicity. The civilized nation. The city on the hill. The world's example, watchdog nation, half the population stressed and depressed. I am the product of this great nation. The enlightened or the savages? Material worth, external displays of wealth and happiness. Who's happy? Traffic jams and suicide, long lines, frustration and crime. The fruit of our labor. Life liberty the pursuit of happiness that only few reach. Those who shed the ideology of modernism. Technology races in the midst of racism. Comfortable living amongst the starved and homeless. Everyone's goal—to succeed and "be somebody." Who in the end is who they were when they started? I'm not. Education is the key, the ticket. Where's my family, my brother, my sister? I'm going to succeed. Graduate, the real world. The real world? Ask the Indians and ask the slaves. Ask the rainforest and the atmosphere. Ask God what's real. What are we chasing? While we chase who gets left behind? I left myself behind, lost myself. Who have I become and who have I forgotten? Today someone needs me. I can't stop, no room. No room for love, no time to talk. Numbers, paper, grades supercede need.

And the flag flaps in the wind. Individuals cry, communities cry, homeless cry. Animals weep and ask god why. Gas prices up. Empty churches, hollow hearts. No one sings, no time to dance. Family in Seattle chasing. Family in California chasing. Overcrowded jails. War on drugs. Divorce more common, longevity a rarity. Instant gratification nation. I am America. Drunkenness, addiction, suicide. The land where my ancestors worked, picked

and died. Freedom to chase. The complicated maze with no way out. Too many lights, can't see the stars at night. Nicotine and caffeine. Fuel for survival. Never read the Bible. Grisham and King feed the masses, give food for thought. But who's thinking and about what? We hate each other. Trust no one. Suspicious glances, lock the doors, keep the world out. I don't dream at night. No time for dreams. No fantasy. Only fake reality. New cars, new homes, shattered families litter the landscape. Dead ears and decaying minds programmed for success. The American dream is really not. I want to dream of childhood and flight. Dreams of Kings like Martin. Smiling souls and music. No more videos only live shows. The art of life. Freedom to show what the heart feels. Don't judge me by numbers. What is a real man? A good man? Too many babysitters, parents too busy chasing, forever chasing. Babysitters chasing. No time to hold hands and walk. Mailboxes full of emptiness. University of. . . "we'll help you chase." "You help us chase." How fast can You run? How fast can We run? No finish line, can't remember where I started. Running for life, which way. Wrong turns, catch up, too black to find the way. People pass. My lungs burn as I scream, but no one has room. They're lost, too. They trust no one, I trust no one. We run, we scream, we chase. We cry alone.

Sometime after 11:11 while being platonic

He makes 11:12 the new time for wishing
"World Peace," he says.

He knows as well as I do,
that the nature of human beings
is to hurt each other
and we have the battle scars to prove it.
We cover them up
with sarcasm and laughter
during conversation,
but we both know
that eventually, one of us
will lob a grenade in
and blow this whole thing up.

But until then,
he's wishing for world peace.

Mother/Daughter Reciprocal

Mama, I know your body
like it's my own, emerged
from the bath, naked,
and I see you as God sees you—
breasts pulled to the tile by time,
skin dripping from gravity
like water slipping through the drain,
the belly's low scoop
a suitcase opened and shut again,
pubic mass caught in the seam.

Mama, you know my body
because it's your own, sprung
from the wine of your womb,
an umbilical memory
of woman-reincarnate—
skin blooming in pink chrysanthemums,
Gaia's rivers licking
the shores of my breasts,
hips with their pendulum swing,
the stomach's satchel
still tightly buttoned
and ripe with seed.

Opal Palmer Adisa

Gray Pussy Hair

i take the mirror
to my crotch
and am not amused
at the salt sprinkled
so generously

why hadn't my mother
forewarned me

i only invite
hard muscled men
between my spread legs
wondering if in the din of passion
they think me mother
fuck me like the anger
they could not raise
in boyhood voice

after my naked pleasure
is appeased
my intolerant ears
half-listen
anxious to toss my boy-toys
forever seeking a mother
i refuse to be
but i'm kind
fanning their egos
until my itch flames
again

Michelle Curtis

Carefree Summer On The Road

Those were the days when your hair was long and the sun highlighted the dull
bronze into a sunset of rays.

The highway has never been a better friend to me and I kept pressing the pedal.

We didn't care that we used too much gasoline in the hot summer sun and that
the exhaust fumes polluted the air.

I didn't care if my name wasn't Samantha and yours wasn't Jill and that nachos
and beer were the cheapest around closing time.

We ran out of shampoo and used hotel soap the day that I traded my shirt for
two silver rings.

While we wore the rings we smiled goofy like we had just made a killer deal.

In reality, the shirt was worth fifty and the rings about ten but that only counts
during the days money was worth something.

I had all my worth shoved into a small flowered suitcase thrown over my shoulder
as we headed for the next town.

Chris Copits

video girl

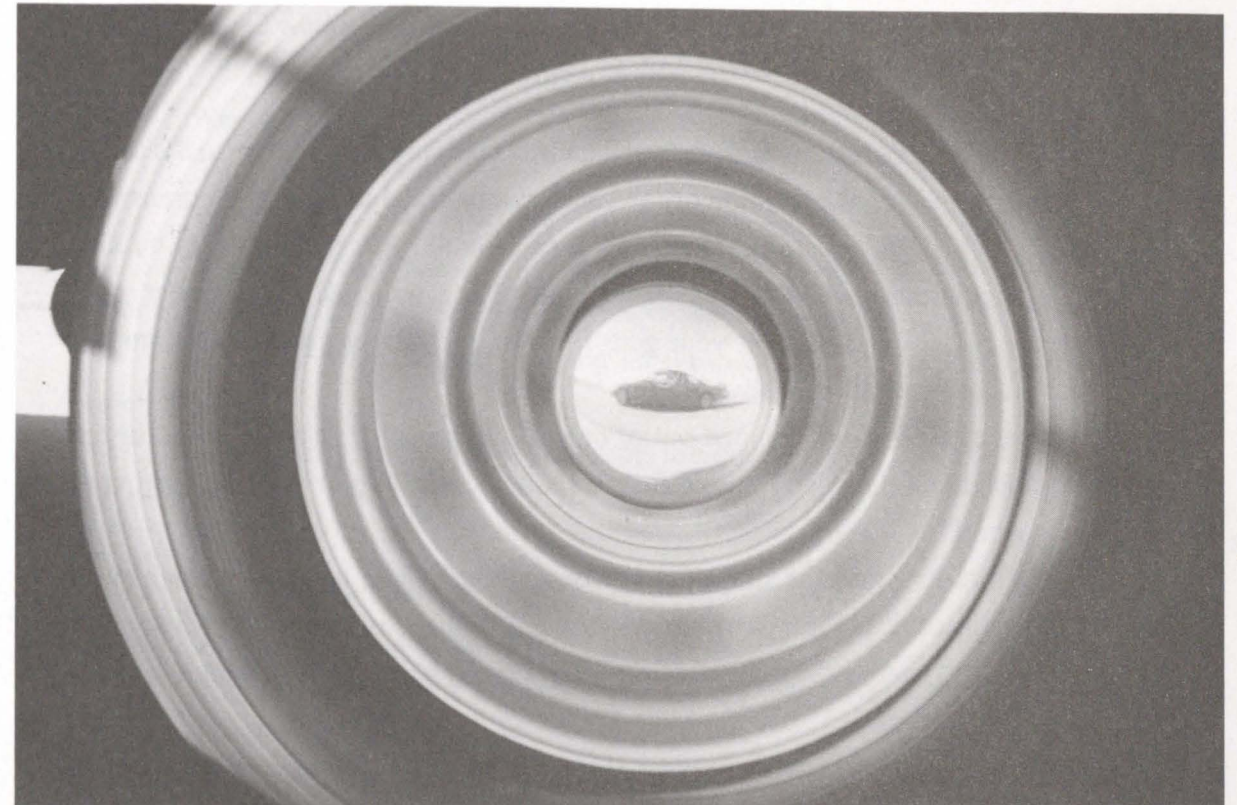
i remember
in a saturated technicolor hue
with static scenery,
her eyes
that eventually wandered past me.

like a scratchy victrola,
with silky strings forever creepy
her voice a beacon in this lonely world-
haunting with its unattainability;
and, in the end, directed to someone else.
(as it always seems to be!)

my thirty minute date
every Tuesday at eleven
waiting for a skirt shot on the couch
hoping time would pass quickly
before the glow under my door would give me away.

so impossible to touch her
her face pixilated upon closer inspection;
i hear she has a tattoo
squinting, i can't make out details-
her bloneness eternal on Kodak stock

i remember the black and white photographs of yesteryear
with the subjects long gone;
her smile was a record of time long past,
but all tape disintegrates,
and she disappeared into the years.



J.D. Giffin

Excerpt from *World without Dreams*

July 24, 4502

03:00.00 Dominick Price's Residential Unit

Two marked PD transports and one small unmarked transport pulled up to the corner of Morgan St. and Ice Ave., the location of Dominick's residential unit. After the transports came to a stop, Captain Brame put on his headset so he could talk to his soldiers through their helmet communicators: "Ok gentlemen, Dominick Price, believed to be a leader in the E.L.F. Underground, is our target. Set your guns for stun. We only want to knock him out. Remember, the Doctor wants him alive."

His team of elite troops jumped out of one of the transport vessels decked in full body armor, resembling riot gear. Captain Brame shouted, "He's up in level 36, section C, unit 101. Move out!"

His PD's rushed into the building tightly clinching their weapons, which were connected by a thick cable to their power packs. Captain Brame casually walked over to the unmarked transport, "Don't worry, Doctor. The only way he's getting out of that building is in our custody."

"I hope so.... for your sake, Captain Brame!" The window went up shutting out Captain Brame and ending the conversation. Captain Brame walked over to the command vessel to monitor the team's communication.

"Uh, Captain, we have a problem," the team leader said.

"What problem?" he asked emphatically.

"Sir, the lock consists of a retinal scanner, and we don't have his retinal scan in our database."

"Hold on a sec," he said rotating his body off to his left, "Arthoe, can you bypass the retinal scan?"

"Umm, I think so," he stammered.

"Don't think, just do it!" Brame commanded in a sharp crisp voice.

"Yes, Captain."

While he hacked through the security system, the camera on the Team leader's helmet showed Dominick's door slowly inching open.

"Sir, the door is starting to open," Arthoe stated, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Good work, Arthoe."

"Sir?" he said with a quivering voice.

"Yes, Arthoe?"

"We have another problem."

"Now what!?!?" he yelled, his voice bouncing off the walls of the transport vessel.

"Sir, apparently there's a tamper-proof code on the door lock and it just stopped the door in its tracks. It's open, but only by a few inches."

"Team A, what the hell is going on up there!?" he screamed into his headset's microphone.

"Sir, the door started to open but came to a quick stop. It's open but only by an inch or two."

"Captain?"

"Go ahead team leader."

"May we blast open the lock?"

Thinking for a second, Captain Brame spoke, "Most definitely. Switch from stun to electric pulse."

A "yes sir" echoed in his ears followed by a "clear" as the team leader changed the setting on his weapon and activated it.

All at once, the lights began to fluctuate and flicker as the team leader's power pack started to let off a series of high repetition clicks. He took aim and squeezed the trigger. Bright beams of blue light exploded from the gun's barrel in a static fizz, hitting the retinal scanner panel and blowing off the faceplate. The beam scorched the electronic circuits creating a cloud of toxic fumes that would make anyone other than a professional soldier sick to their stomach. While the hot lights of the hallway heated the smoke, three other PD's got into position and shoved the heavy door back into the wall. The aluminum alloy door scraped against the iron channel that held the door on its track, creating a sleep awakening pandemonium. Due to all of the commotion of getting into Dominick's residence, several

other of the PD's had to force some curious occupants of the floor back into their units.

"Sir," said the team leader.

"Yes, team A."

"We've opened the door and are preparing to enter the residence."

As the smoke from the scorched electronic circuits settled to the floor, the team leader noticed a red light beam that cut across the bottom of the doorway.

"Ok team A, I want you to enter the residence very carefully. You should consider the target armed and extremely dangerous."

"That's a ten-four, over and out." The team leader pointed to the laser at the entryway as he waved for three others to follow behind him. Two more soldiers took up guard at the entryway while several more moved to each end of the hall. As the team moved deeper into the unit, they found a window missing from the back wall. After finding the window, the team leader radioed Captain Brame, "Captain, he got aw—" A thunderous explosion raced to the Captains ears through the headset.

"What just happened? Arthoe get me back that video feed!"

"Yes *sir*, right away *sir*," Arthoe responded, hurriedly typing into the computer the commands to reconnect the video feed.

"Sir, you can now see on monitor one," he added as he finished typing in the final lines of code.

While the clip started to play, Arthoe spoke again, "Sir, I believe we were attacked with an ODMD (Organic Demolecularizer Device)."

"Don't you think I know what device is capable of doing this volume of damage? A better question, however, is why didn't the leader see the trigger component before it turned them into dust. Also, how did one get into Price's hands? Arthoe, why don't you grab the molecularizer collector as well as a couple of the men standing guard outside, and go up to Dominick's unit to collect the piles of dust. Be careful."

"Yes *sir*."

Arthoe and a couple of soldiers stationed outside the van went up to Dominick's unit

as Captain Brame returned to Doctor Valt's car.

"Yes Captain?" the Doctor said in an aggravated voice.

"Doctor, I'm afraid that Dominick escaped, and in the process, he managed to activate a O.D.M.D., which my team didn't locate until it turned them into dust. I currently have several soldiers collecting the remains of the team so we can return them to the hospital for remolecularization."

"Captain, I want results, not excuses. We must locate Dominick Price before dawn and your time is running out." Disgusted, Doctor Valt shut the window and his vessel took off.

Returning to the van, Brame reviewed a map of the area, plugging into the computer the coordinates of his location along with the sectors the Demons patrolled. He then cross-referenced the Demons report logs with the estimated time that Dominick escaped from his residential unit. After a couple of seconds, the screen displayed all of the Demons encounters with humans during the determined time. Unfortunately, his search came up negative when he typed in the keywords "Dominick Price." Next, he pulled up a detailed map of the sector and projected it onto a white electronic touch pad on the left interior wall of the van.

"Arthoe what's going on up there? Do you have them all collected?"

"Almost, *sir*."

"Once you've collected them all, I want you to send the containers down and start going through the unit. Look for any information pertaining to the possible location of the E.L.F. headquarters, along with anything we could link to the E.L.F."

"Yes, *sir*."

Captain Brame then went back to marking a perimeter for their search as he called base camp.

"I need Teams B, C, D, and E to report to sector 92. The fugitive, Dominick Price, is armed and very dangerous. He has already taken out Team A so be very cautious. We want him alive, but don't be afraid to rough him up a little. Last but not least, do not report any of this to the Demons. By the time you reach your coordinates, I should have the rundown on everyone in the sector and where they are, if not in their units."

After breaking communication with base camp, Brame called the lab containing the

Nighthawks, an elite core of highly advanced robots with the added capabilities of flight and radar.

"Dimetri, Captain Brame here. Release the Nighthawks."

"But sir, the Hawks haven't been fully tested in combat situation nor have the—"

"I'm very aware that they haven't been fully tested and that we're not sure the Demons won't be able to pick them up on radar. We must have them now, do you understand?"

"Yes Sir! I'm powering them up now" A low-pitched whistle hummed in the background. "They should be in sector 92 in five minutes."

"While they're in flight, you can upload the orders I'm sending for them into the central mainframe. You should receive those orders in a few seconds. Brame out!"

Captain Brame returned to his computer, "I want a list of every human in this sector, computer. Cross analyze that with any human not accounted for and print out the new updated list."

The computer beeped and buzzed in response as it clicked its way through the names of people. As Brame's computer completed the new list, Lance opened the door to the van and stepped into it. He carried eight tubs of grayish sand. Vinnie entered a few moments later carrying all of the fallen soldiers' weapons and gear. After placing everything in several storage boxes, they both turned to leave the van when Captain Brame spoke, "Vinnie, stay here, I need you to run communication for me. As for you, Lance, I want you to help Arthoe search through the unit. Look for anything that might tell us the location of E.L.F. Headquarters or where their meeting place might be."

"Yes, *sir*" said Lance as he turned to walk out the door.

Vinnie quickly took his seat at the communications station. While Captain Brame briefed him on what was going on, the computer spit out a new list with five names on it.

"Vinnie, contact the Demons and ask if they know the whereabouts of Scott Smith, Angie Wood, Michael Rivers, Jason Miller, and Jessica Springier."

"Yes, *sir*, but what should I tell them it's for?"

"Tell them Doctor Valt's human location reader has malfunctioned and we must locate these potential defectors to the E.L.F. Underground. He needs their locations to send out the Public Defenders."

"Yes, *sir*," he said as he placed the call through the computer's touch screen.

"Sir, the Demons already have Scott Smith, Angie Wood, and Jason Miller in their custody. They will transport the captives to the hospital early tomorrow morning and place them under the care of Doctor Valt. As for the others, they're still at large."

"At least we have a start and a possible unraveling of the mystery."

"What mystery, *sir*?" asked Vinnie.

Turning to make eye contact with Vinnie, Brame explained:

"The E.L.F. is a very smart organization, which is one of the reasons why they have existed for over five hundred years. Every human has an individualized tracking sensor located somewhere in their body. The Demons use this sensor to monitor the human population like cattle. It tells the Demons and us their location every second of everyday. The E.L.F. must have found a way to not only locate the sensor but also to either deactivate it or remove it. This is why locating who's not in the sector and comparing it to the Demons list gives us a slight advantage in pin pointing members of the Underground. They're very tricky to capture, however. Notify the Nighthawks to pay a visit to Michael Rivers and Jessica Springer's residential units to see if Dominick Price is there."

"Yes, Sir."

"Arthoe, how's the search going up there?"

"Sir, the place is clean. He knew we were coming."

"Does he live there?"

"As far as I can tell he does, we found a few articles of clothing in the wardrobe closet and some freeze dried food in the arctic-freezer."

"Have you found what triggered the O.D.M.D.?"

"Right now, it's hard to say. We should know more once we get back to base camp and get a chance to look at team A's memory chips."

"What did you find out about the window?" asked Captain Brame.

"Well, Dominick's fingerprints are all over it so he must have set it inside the unit."

"How did he escape out the window?"

"Your guess is as good as mine."

"Fine! You and Lance get back down here!" His fingers slid down his forehead to

rub his eye sockets.

Just as he started to enjoy the silence of the van, all the little dots on the map marking the patrols lit up and sang with a repetition of beeps, signaling the completion of the sector sweeps.

Vinnie yelled aloud, "Sir, all four ground patrols report a negative on Dominick Price."

With his thumbs and index fingers forming an L, Brame rubbed the corners of his eyes and said, "Tell them this mission was a top secret training op and to return back to base camp."

"Yes, sir."

Moments later, Arthoe and Lance returned to the van. Captain Brame stood in front of the van's cargo area between the electronic map and the research console. As he looked at the map, he waved his hand, gesturing Arthoe and Lance to sit down at their control centers.

"Ok, gentlemen, as you're all aware, tonight we had one of the top leaders of the E.L.F. Underground in our hands, and due to lack of planning, he got away. Eight of our team members have been reduced to the size and consistency of SAND!" The pounding of his fist on the countertop of his workstation accented his final word. After a moment, he continued: "Unfortunately, the Demon patrols didn't help us much today either. We also dispatched teams B thru E, but after searching the entire sector with lasers and infer red equipment, they found nothing. So, my hand was forced to deploy the Nighthawks."

Arthoe interrupted, "You sent out the Hawks! You know they haven't been fully-field tested yet; besides, if the Demons spot them, we're dead!"

"Yes, Arthoe, I understand they haven't been fully-tested, and I'm aware what will happen if the Demons find out that our lab has been creating a new breed of soldier. I also know that if we don't find Dominick Price tonight, regardless of whether or not the Demons find out about the Hawks, we'll die soon. So I ask, does anyone else see a

problem with the use of the Hawks in this mission?"

A nervous silence spread throughout the van.

"Good, glad you see things my way. There are six-suspects who we haven't located yet. The Demons have Scott Smith, Angie Wood, and John Miller in their custody. They were captured around twenty-four hundred hours to zero-one hundred hours. The Demons are transporting them to the Hospital as we speak. Their capture leaves Michael Rivers, Jessica Springer, and Dominick Price still on the loose. I sent the Hawks to Michael River's unit in hopes of finding Dominick. If that turns up negative, then I'll move them to Jessica Springer's. I have reason to believe those individuals are highly involved in the hierarchy of the E.L.F."

After Captain Brame stopped talking, the van once again turned quiet. Each man thought about the best way to find Dominick Price since they only had seven hours left before Doctor Valt's report to the Demon Council."

Lance broke the silence, "We may not have Dominick, but we do have Angie Carter, Scott Smith, and John Miller. We could use them to our advantage. Sure they may not be Dominick Price, but they could still buy us some extra time."

"Yes, Lance, they could, but Doctor Valt has to have a member of the E.L.F. Hierarchy; otherwise, he gets terminated! For the Demons, termination means a lot more than job loss, and I'm not looking forward to that because if he losses his life, we'll lose ours first. Understand?! Besides, we've caught many of their recruits and members in the past. None of them knew anything about the hierarchy of the E.L.F.; their desired targets the size of their resistance or the location of their headquarters. My question to you is how can these three help us in our cause any more than the others before them?"

"What if we played their game?" questioned Lance.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, what if we took Scott Smith or John Miller and posed one of them as Dominick Price. We won't show him to the public or the Demons, but we'll use him as a front to delay the Demon's judgment on us."

Rubbing his chin, Captain Brame spoke: "We haven't tried that angle yet. Of course, we might also be able to hold them as hostages. In addition, we'll tell the E.L.F. that from

tomorrow on we will remove one person per day from the harvesting lines and execute these people publicly until Dominick comes forth.”

A hush fell over group as they sat and pondered the idea. Slowly they started to nod their heads in agreement.

“Great, it’s settled then. Let’s get back to base camp, research what happened to Team A, and start creating a profile for my presentation to Doctor Valt. In the event Valt doesn’t go for it, run the identification scans and locate Dominick Price’s harvesting line.”

03:30 Ulthuan Temple

After escaping from his residential unit, Dominick returned to the E.L.F. Headquarters where James met him. “Thank God you made it out,” James said as he gave Dominick the customary one-armed hug.

“If it weren’t for you, I probably would be sitting locked up in one of Doctors Valt’s tombs right now. I also want to thank you for the grappling hook. That my friend was one of your best ideas yet.”

“I’m just glad you made it all the way down the building before the rope disintegrated”

Looking down at his cut hands, Dominick replied, “You’re telling me. I was rather worried because I only made it halfway down the building when the fiery explosion busted out the open window and started burning the rope. As a matter of fact, I had to slide down the last five floors.”

“Unfortunately, even though we did a great job keeping you out of Valt’s hands, I’m afraid to report that the Demons did manage to capture some of our people.”

“Do we know who they captured?”

“No. However, we do believe the prisoners attended the recruiting meeting. Right now, we don’t know much else, but I do think this would make a good time to step up our attacks while the Demons are still surprised by tonight’s events.”

“Well, I don’t normally like to be this bold, but this does give us a good chance to be a little more aggressive.”

“We should wait though and see when Valt decides to do one of his broadcasts.”

“I know, but I hate waiting to see what scam he comes up with to try to drive us out of hiding.”

BIO's

Opal Palmer Adisa is a literary critic, poet, prose writer, storyteller, and artist with several published works.

Leslie Benson is WSU English major who works for *The Guardian*.

Jack Bowman is a local Dayton artist who is involved in the WSU poetry group Gathering of Lost Voices.

Don Bruce is a WSU grad student who works for *The Guardian* and has trouble submitting via email.

Brian Burch is a poet from Ontario who gave us the wrong email address, making it impossible to get a more creative bio.

Gloria Burgess is an Affiliate Professor at the University of Washington. She writes poetry to help save her life and the lives of others, especially the oppressed and systematically silenced.

Bradley Cahill*

Kim Champion*

Adrienne Cassel is a member of the WSU staff who has decided to live as far away from us as possible. She is a mother, thinker, teacher, and poet.

Mindy Cooper is a self-governing nation with a profound sense of justice. She majors in English and Women's Studies at WSU, and her words are melted butter on a hot page. She edits *Nexus* and does not write her own bio.

Chris Copits*

Michelle Curtis*

Noah T. Falck is a Dayton native who is studying writing, daydreaming & the learning process of educating young minds.

Krista Franklin is a WSU grad who has moved to the windy city and once in a while sends poems to the little people.

Christopher Green where is your bio? You know better.

J.D. Giffin is a WSU art student who goes back and forth between being totally reliable and completely undependable.

Stephanie Irwin may be majoring in something and may be graduating but neither she, nor I, nor her parents are entirely sure.

Sarah Jenson is currently beating her head against a wall. However, her future plans include joining a circus.

Zai Jenya is a senior majoring in Sociology, minoring in African/African-American Studies. He is a member the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Sarah Kunchik is a WSU student who is not as passive as she looks.

Jennifer Lynne is an English major, I'm not saying anymore for fear of messing the whole thing up.

Lane Martin*

Fred Marion is a WSU student who has more trouble with first date etiquette than any other person I know.

Patricia Murphy is the former editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review*. She currently teaches writing at Arizona State University.

Tim Mohrhaus was the Media Coordinator until his untimely abduction by some university in Cincinnati.

Jay Nerlinger is an artist even though he doesn't act like it. He does laundry by day and breaks things by night.

Kelli Rodin*

Aaron Rotsinger is a young cynic who often enjoys scrawling misanthropic anecdotes in dead languages all over other people's walls.

Lincoln N. Screiber is a senior broadcasting major, the sports director at WWSU, who DJs along with his cow Norm.

William Scott is a senior at WSU majoring in education.

Rachelle Sedenik*

Heather Skinner is an art student at WSU and a member of the women's rugby team.

Alicia Raye Speed is majoring in just about everything and works more jobs than any other person on the planet. She is the uncrowned head feminist of WSU.

Virgil Suarez is a Cuban poet who resides in Florida. He is the author of fifteen books of prose and poetry.

Jim Tarjeft is an Electrical Engineering major who writes and argues in his spare time.

Teddy Taylor*
Sheree Renée Thomas*
Victoria Tolbert*

Scott Waltner left this quote, "If you stop at the first mountain peak that you conquer you'll never know what other treasures be left undiscovered."

* indicate that there was no bio available,

HEY!

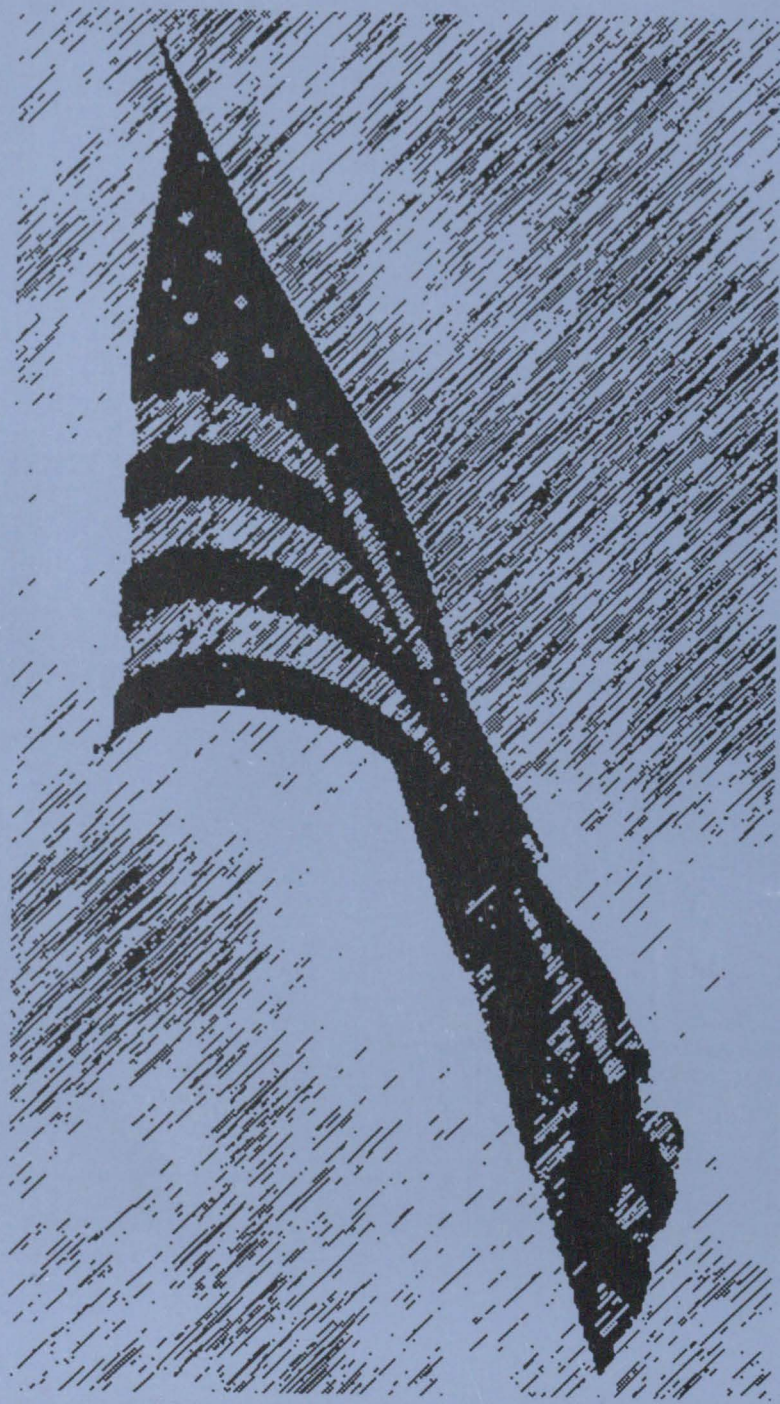
Nexus is taking submissions for the Winter 2002 issue. We need poetry, fiction, nonfiction, black and white artwork and photography. We encourage you to submit more than one piece of work. You will not get your writing back. Please submit a short bio along with your work. We encourage text submissions by email (as attachments.) The deadline is February 13, 2002.

THANKS.

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THANKS



Tim Mohrhaus